



**Department of Justice
U.S. Attorney's Office
Southern District of Texas**

Donald J. DeGabrielle, Jr. • United States Attorney

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

APRIL 11, 2006

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JOHN YEMBRICK

PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICE

(713) 567-9388

SERIAL BANK ROBBER CONVICTED

Now faces no less than 70+ years in federal prison without parole

HOUSTON, TX – Lewis Gilmore Hurst, 46, of Austin, Texas, was found guilty today by United States District Judge Lynn Hughes of three counts of armed bank robbery, three counts of using a firearm during a bank robbery, and three counts of possessing a firearm after being convicted of three violent felonies.

On January 27, 2004, Lewis Gilmore Hurst, while using a firearm, robbed the Encore Bank located on the 5400 block of FM 1960. After asking the employees to “fan-out” the money that they had gathered on a table so that he could examine it for dye packs or tracing devices, Hurst left the bank telling customers in the bank, “now they had something to tell their grandkids about.” Hurst escaped with \$54,715.

On June 9, 2004, Hurst returned to the same Encore Bank and again robbed the bank while using a firearm. This time, Hurst approached the same bank manager that he victimized the first time and stated, “I’m back. You know the drill.” Once the bank manager provided all of the money that he could, Hurst angrily demanded more money and pointed the pistol to the bank manager’s forehead. Hurst was able to escape with an additional \$12,675.

On July 15, 2004, Hurst, again while using a firearm, robbed the World Savings bank located on the 7500 block of FM 1960. Hurst demanded that the manager enter the vault, retrieve money, place the money on a table and “fanned-out” the money so that he could examine it and determine whether it contained dye packs or tracing devices. At one point, Hurst threatened to shoot the manager in the face if the manager did not quickly comply with Hurst’s demands. On the way out of the door of the bank, Hurst pulled down the bandana he had been wearing revealing himself to bank employees, while saying, “That was stupid.” As Hurst fled the bank, a bank customer followed him and called 911. Hurst was apprehended and identified by bank employees. Bandanas, gloves, hats, a firearm, and a black bag containing \$22,467 were found in his car.

Hurst confessed to committing all three bank robberies to special agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and to having used the firearm found in his vehicle in all three robberies.

Hurst has seven prior felony convictions of which four are state convictions for other

robberies.

Hurst's trial was scheduled to begin today with jury selection. However, during the pre-trial phase of the prosecution, Hurst had attempted to assert insanity as his defense to the charges, but offered no expert testimony to counter the opinion of a court-appointed mental health expert that Hurst was both sane and competent. While the jury was en route to the courtroom, Hurst, who represented himself but was assisted by appointed counsel, told the court he saw no point in "putting the witnesses through this all again," and instead agreed to a stipulated bench trial.

The jury was excused and the proceeding continued as a stipulated facts bench trial before Judge Hughes. Following the summary presentation of the government's evidence, the court found Hurst guilty on all nine counts.

Each of the three armed bank robbery conviction carries a maximum punishment of 25 years in prison. A first conviction for using a firearm during a bank robbery carries a mandatory minimum punishment of seven years in prison to run consecutive to all other sentences imposed. The second and third counts of conviction for using a firearm during a bank robbery each carry a mandatory minimum punishment of 25 years imprisonment which also must be served consecutive to all other sentences. Each of the three conviction for possessing a firearm as a career violent felon carries a mandatory minimum punishment of 15 years imprisonment. All counts of conviction also carry a maximum fine of \$250,000 fine.

Judge Hughes has scheduled sentencing for July 17, 2006. At sentencing, the defendant now faces a mandatory minimum statutory penalty of 72 years in prison, without the possibility of parole.

The prosecution of Hurst is part of an ongoing gun violence reduction initiative of the Department of Justice called Project Safe Neighborhoods in partnership with state and local law enforcement agencies nationwide in a unified offensive to prosecute individuals who possess firearms or ammunition in violation of federal law. In Texas, Project Safe Neighborhood extends the partnerships created through Texas Exile, a similar statewide initiative operating to reduce gun violence.

This case was investigated in a joint effort by the Harris County Sheriff's Office, the Houston Police Department, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation. The case is being prosecuted by Special Assistant United States Attorney James T. Kitchen and Assistant United States Attorney Richard Harris.

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